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Statement of

Mr. James M. Beggs  
Administrator

National Aeronautics and Space Administration

before the

Subcommittee on Space Science and Applications  
Committee on Science and Technology  
House of Representatives

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee:

I appreciate the opportunity to testify before you on the subject of Shuttle Operations and to provide my views regarding STS organizational and ownership issues.

The Space Shuttle has demonstrated that it is the most reliable space transportation vehicle ever built. I believe it has the capability to meet all presently projected foreign, commercial, DOD, and NASA requirements for years to come and provides this Nation an outstanding capability for exploring commercial opportunities in space.

One of my major objectives is to establish the framework and policies upon which to base the organization and management structure for future STS operations. To accomplish this, I intend to establish a Shuttle Operations Strategic Planning Group to undertake a comprehensive assessment of options for future operation of the Space Transportation System. We are also beginning a review of our Shuttle policies to make them current and ensure that they will help us progress toward our goals.

The Strategic Planning group will address your request for a "preliminary timetable for completion of activities to fence all Shuttle operating budgets, facilities, and personnel along with rationale for timing of each milestone." They will also address organizational design and identify options that would allow segregation of Shuttle operations within NASA, possibly preparatory to divestiture and formation within a government or commercial corporation or other institutional setting. My own feeling is that there are a number of developmental efforts that we must continue that may take us through about 1988, but that we should be able to come back to the Subcommittee late in 1986 with possible options to turn the Shuttle operations over to a quasi-government corporation, or transfer it to the private sector.

Our planning during the next few years focuses on bringing the STS to operational maturity. This includes: essential modifications to the Orbiter fleet; improved life and operating margins on the main engines, particularly the high pressure pumps; production buildup and producibility improvements on the External Tank and the Solid Rocket Booster; ensuring that an improved operational capability is in place in the next three years; strengthening our partnership with DOD and helping them prepare for manned space operations at Vandenberg Air Force Base and the Shuttle Operations and Planning Center at Colorado Springs; and providing increasingly efficient and customer friendly operations for Shuttle and Spacelab users. Jesse Moore, the recently appointed Associate Administrator for Space Flight and the NASA Center Directors, who will be appearing before the Subcommittee the next two days, will provide you with more details on our activities in each of these areas.

This concludes my prepared remarks. I will be happy to answer your questions.